THE

HISTORY

OF THE RENOWNED

Mr. Fearlittle, Ned Burnell, and Matilda, with the History of her Dog.

THE WORLD AS IT GOES,
Let me get meat enough, money and clothes.

EDINBURGH:
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THE

CIPHER.

LETTER I.

GEORGE BAMFIELD, ESQ;

TO

MR. CLEMENTS.

Melville-Hall.

EVER ſince the departure of my dear Mr. Clements from Melville-Hall, my time has been conſtantly employed in accompliſhing thoſe ſchemes of improvement formerly concerted between us; and I now begin to long exceedingly for that period which is to beſtow on me the pleaſure of your company, in order that I may have an opportunity of convincing you, in how ſhort a term of years this remote, and, ſo lately, almoſt

moſt deſolate ſpot, promiſes to ſmile in all the beauty of modern cultivation. Indeed, I now flatter myſelf in the pleaſing proſpect of enjoying the remainder of life in midſt of that peace and ſerenity which ſuch a ſweet retirement naturally ſuggeſts, entirely free from the apprehenſion of any ſudden viciſſitude of fortune, and my mind neither enſlaved by the purſuit of riches, nor diſturbed by the deluſive dreams of ambition. I have been uſed to the buſtle of an active life; yet, by the ſhort trial I have had of rural ſolitude, I find that time will by no means lie heavy upon my hands. The neighbourhood it is true, conſiſts of few people either ſuited to my turn of thinking, or proper, in my opinion, for cementing an intimate acquaintance; but mirth and good humour often grace my humble board; and an innocent, though noiſy converſation, is no bad ſubſtitute for wit and high-flown elocution. You know my land abounds with game; and the river, that now forms ſo delightful a circuit in front of my manſion, I am told, will ſoon afford excellent

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lent diverſion. I have yet a ſufficient ſtore of the theory of agriculture to apply to practice; my library is a tolerable ſelection; my avenues are ſolemn and inviting; and when I add, that the preſence, and delectable talk of my Sophia, ſpreads the moſt pleaſing luſtre over the whole, I have undoubtedly enumerated a competent variety of amuſement.

I have juſt ſaid, my dear Sir, that there are but few of my neighbours qualified for intimacy; yet, out of this few, there are two who almoſt conſtantly form a part of our little ſociety. Mr. Fearlittle has ſpent his days in the ſervice of his country, and has now retired to this vicinity to enjoy the comforts ariſing from an Adjutant's half-pay. This gentleman I ever make truly welcome, becauſe I entertain particular ſympathy for his ſituation; and becauſe too, he is the deareſt companion of Ned Burnell, the youthful owner of a little eſtate that lies contiguous to me, and with whom I can boaſt but a few months acquaintance; yet, in this time, ſo deeply has he ingratiated himſelf into my favour, that I verily be-

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lieve the want of his company would materialy damp the ſatisfaction I at preſent experience,

It was on the evening of a ſultry day;---I had walked to enjoy the cool breeze under the ſhade of my winding elm-walk; Sophia hung on my arm---"Such "the haunts of Meditation," deſcribed by Thomſon;---and we had entered upon reading a little ſelection of that Poet's beauties, but were ſuddenly interupted by the report of a muſquet; the ſmoke directed us to the quarter from whence the noiſe proceeded, and we perceived, on the other ſide of the hedge, a youth, with all the marks of deep ſorrow in his countenance, ſtoop over a beautiful ſpaniel the bleeding, but undeſigned victim of the fatal ſhot---"Poor Cæſar!" ſaid he, "You was the faithfulleſt creature--and "you was the favourite of my ſweet "Matilda!—How oft have you lain out "in the fields to welcome home the ſteps "of your poor expected maſter!"

The little wounded animal ſeemed to underſtand the affliction of its maſter: it licked his hand, looked piteouſly in his

his face, and, without making the leaſt complain, expired——I ſaw the tears ſtart from the eyes of the gentleman: I admired ſuch a proof of ſenſibility, and I was eager to enquire into the cauſe that had produced the death of the faithful Cæſar—it was ſoon explained.—The grove had formerly been the delight of Matilda; and Cæſar, after her death, had paid his daily viſit to that place where he had ſo often ſtrayed with his miſtreſs. This was his laſt excurſion.—he had laid himſelf down under a buſh, when chance brought his maſter to the thicket; unfortunately, a thruſh accidentally lighted on a twig near to Cæſar; Burnell levelled his fowling-piece—the aim was unerring, but part of the contents were lodged in the breaſt of his truſty ſervant!

I alſo ſoon after learned the ſtory of Matild—She was the orphan daughter of a military officer, was amiable and accompliſhed. Burnell became acquaint-with her at a very early period, and their love had long been mutual. The father of the youth was, however, utterly averſe to a match where money formed no part

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of the dower; he treated his ſon with great harſhneſs, and forced him to reſide in a diſtant part of the iſland, in order to wean him from a paſſion that he deemed ſo diſgraceful. The meaſure did not work the deſired effect; their love only gathered ſtrength from oppoſition; and when the old gentleman died, the youth hurried home with all the impetuoſity of deſire, to claim the promiſe of his Matilda.—Alas! death, that gave riſe to his hopes, too ſoon blaſted them for ever. He found his beloved Matilda cold and lifeleſs!

Whether this ſevere ſtroke, my friend, wrought the effect, or that nature has planted it within him, I know not; but ſo much a ſlave is he, at this time, to a whimſical imagination, that he forms the compleateſt oddity I ever converſed with. The character the Spectator draws of Will Wimble might be ſucceſsfuly applied to Ned Burnell, but yet come far ſhort of giving you a right conception of him: I am often at a loſs, whether moſt to admire the goodneſs of his heart, and the generſioty of his actions, or deride

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his genius for miſchief, and his humour of being entertained with trifles; for one while you may ſee him melted into all the tenderneſs of grief for the misfortunes of others, and relieving the needy with the profuſion of prodigality, and the next minute, perhaps, ſetting all his wits to work in order to bring people together by the ears, or in making merry with the fluttering of a butterfly. Not, however, that I believe he deliberately contrives the real hurt of any perſon, though his fancy hurries him into ſo many extravagancies, that it is incredible, almoſt to imagine how many tumults and quarrels he has been the inſtigator of; and ſcarcely a ſingle perſon has, at one time or other, eſcaped the touch of his machinations.

Ned Burnell never fails of making one at all fairs, and other public meetings, and takes a conſpicious part in all controverſies; and being not only generally known, but generally eſteemed too, he is, for moſt part appointed arbitrator, by which means he has many opportunities of fomenting that miſchief that gives

gives him pleaſure. All the boys in this pariſh are trained under his own immediate inſpection; and when a battle takes place, odds are always laid on the head of 'Squire Burnell's champions; and indeed, they find it their intereſt to do credit to a commander, who diſtributes rewards according to the number and dexterity of blows they beſtow on an adverſary in time of an engagement.

Notwithſtanding all this, Burnell is univerſally beloved; he is freely admitted into all companies; is the moſt cheerful and engaging of every party; is perfectly a regiſter of news; and is moſt minutely acquainted with every occurrence that takes place in the compaſs of twenty miles round him: the whole of which he diſcloſes in a ſtrain of pleaſantry ſo peculiar to himſelf, that he never miſſes drawing attention, though not an hearer but knows his own behaviour will be treated in a ſimilar manner in the very next company Ned viſits.

Ned has read a great deal to good purpoſe; and when he is in one of his ſerious humours, diſplays his underſtand-

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ing with ſolidity and judgement; he is a deep connoiſſure in the liberal arts, and has attained a proficiency in painting, by which acquirements, and particulary that of muſic, he is ever an acceptable gueſt, not only on my own account, but becauſe he hardly ever fails recalling my Sophia's thoughts from thoſe melancholy ideas ſhe ſtill at times indulges, and reducing her mind to its native cheerfulneſs.

His annual income is but ſmall, nor does he ſeem any wiſe inclined to encreaſe it by marriage, as he certainly might; however, being now and then a pretty good economiſt, he continues, in ſpite of many exceſſes, to keep free from the clamours of creditors, and from the diſagreeable neceſſity of putting any part of his patrimonial inheritance under the controlment of avaricious money-lenders.

I have been thus particular in giving you a deſcription of this youth's character and ſingular diſpoſitions, becauſe, he this morning informed me, he intends ſhortly to pay London a viſit, and as in

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that caſe, I ſhall make bold to recommend him to your notice, you will be the leſs ſurpriſed at any capricious whim that may attend the actions of ſo odd, but worthy a character.

LETTER II.

EDWARD BURNELL, ESQ.;

TO

PHILIP WENTWORTH, ESQ.

Burnell-Lodge.

HERE, Philip, have I been compoſing my jumbled brains into ſome tolerable conſiſtency, and now have I ſeated myſelf in a poſture of much importance with as much ſolemnity as ever a paragraph ſcribbler amongſt them; I mean to give you an account of an incident that has happened a few days ago, and ever ſince has afforded ſubject for abundance of diſcourſe among the goodly inhabitants of this reſpectable neighbourhood. You

You muſt know then, that I have the honour to be an unworthy member of a certain club, which meets regularly every Wedneſday, in the principal apartment of a little ale-houſe, built in the ſituation of the moſt romantic ſolitude. I have been at ſome pains both to eſtabliſh and keep together this ſociety; not ſo much, I confeſs, ariſing from any great degree of eſteem I entertain from my fellow conſtituents, as from the many opportunities it affords for gratifying the humour I poſſeſs, as well as from a wiſh I have to recompence the honeſt landlord for a ſmall injury, it was ſaid I once did him.

Never do I enter this ſchool of elocution, my dear Philip, but it brings to my remembrance the club at Junly's, ſo humourouſly deſcribed by Doctor Smollet; and was I endowed with an equal faculty at deſcription, you would at once admit the diverſity of our characters not wiſe inferior.

The clergyman of the pariſh, with all due deference to the ſacred function he profeſſes, is conſtantly favoured with the antique chair (that from time immemo-

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rial has occupied the upper corner of the room, and appears a carved witneſs of the ingenuity of many a country artiſt.) He is a gentleman of great gravity of viſage; diſcharges his preſidentſhip with great circumſpection; and, although he drinks freely, and it is pretty generally believed, that he pays adoration at the ſhrine of Bacchus, yet I could never learn that he was deeply overtaken with the influences of that Deity but twice ſince he has been in the curacy; and thoſe times too the more excuſeable, as the firſt was in celebrating the obſequies of an old doating parent, who left him a conſiderable token of remembrance; and the laſt, in having, rather too freely, endeavoured to drown his ſorrow for the loſs of a help-mate, whoſe manner of reaſoning was, it ſeems, a little diſagreeable. At his reverence's right-hand, with a ſteady and perpendicular perſon, ſits the learned and loquacious Mr Syntax, with a head ſtuffed ſo full of philoſophy and ſelf-importance, that not even the commanding voice of Adjutant Fearlittle, who takes poſt directly oppoſite, can keep

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his tongue within the bonds of diſcretion.

Under the ſage warrior ſits the ſlender and prim Doctor Poction, a man of particular uſe in whiſpering ſecrets; and, of late, much enhanced in reputation, by his having been preſent at the amputation of the limb of a certain nobleman.

In front of this diſciple of Hippocrates, and leaning conſtantly upon both elbows, is to be ſeen the corpulent and rich Farmer Harrow; a perſonage, it is true, of no ſhining talents, and rather too much addicted to taciturnity; but then, as he conſtantly ſwallows with open mouth every ſyllable that is uttered in the company, I have hopes he will ſoon be able to ſolve an aſtronomical problem, even with the application of Syntax himſelf; nay, he has ventured to affirm, in the face of the whole aſſembly, that wind is neither more or leſs than air put in violent motion, and that the angles of a triangle are undoubtedly only three. Beſides, I am told, that at a county meeting ſome little time ago, he actually attempted an explanation of the annual revolution

volution of our globe, with no other aſſiſtance than what a quart pot afforded.

The converſation is not a little enlivened by the oratory of Mortage, the attorney, who, however, is rather meddling at times, and is apt to interrupt the pariſh clerk's moſt refined definations, by intruding a quotation from Blackſtone, or ſome other profeſſional writer. Syntax has never been known to reliſh ſuch interuption, and ſtrange ſcences of confuſion often are often the conſequence. Beſides the forgoing, there is a lame juſtice of peace, a political manufacturer, and an atheiſtical exciſeman.

The company had met at the uſual hour laſt Wedneſday; the diſcourſe had branched out in its uſual variety, and the third bowl had produced its uſual exhileration.

"I have often admired that part of "the Newtonian ſyſtem," cried the pariſh clerk, adjuſting his features with his wonted formality, "wherein that natu-"ral inherent power of gravity preſerves "the terraqueous planet from being diſ-"ſipated by the aſtoniſhing centrifugal "force

" force of that motion which is hereby" ——Here a loud and long hem, expreſſive of the ſoldiers diſapprobation, forced back the advancing torrent into the throat of the ſpeaker, and produced an immediate branch of continuity.

The attorney gladly laid hold on the opportunity. " An inſtance of *crim.* " *con.* that has recently occurred," ſaid he, " brings to my remembrance a de- " ciſion that paſſed ſome years poſterior " to the abdication of James the Second. " A. B. defendant, was indicted by plain- " tiff, C for feloniouſly entering his the " the plaintiff's houſe, and ſtealing from " thence the honour of his wife, D. Now " gentlemen, it was clearly proved upon " trial, that D. had conſented previouſ- " ly to the theft, and that by her own " orders the door was left only on the " latch, of courſe it fell not under the " ſtate of Burglary. Neither could it be " deemed a rape for the ſame reaſons. " C. was then adviſed to bring his ac- " tion for treſpaſs or ſeduction: but I " will this moment clearly demonſtrate, " gentlemen, that they might have as

" reaſon-

" reaſonably indicted defendant, A. B. " for grand larceny, *videlicet*, ſtealing " from the perſon—you may aſk per- " haps, what did he ſteal?"—Syntax's eye had expreſſed evident indignation—he was nettled at ſuch a vulgar ſubſtitution for his ſublime topic, and he muttered ſomething which ſounded like impertinent jackanapes.

Mortgage continued his ſolemnity of his delivery—but changed the ſubject of it—" Some men," ſaid he, " have a par- " ticular antipathy at the mention of an " adulterous proceſs, and this might be " imputed to a variety of cauſes. Hu- " man nature is frail; and when the ma- " trimonial incloſure has once been broke " through, no huſband can be ſuppoſed " to reliſh any thing that puts him in " mind of ſuch an injury."

An apoſtrophe, which darted ſo direct a reflection at the virtue of Mrs. Syntax, was far from extinguiſhing thoſe ſparks of iracibility already contracted in the boſom of the clerk.—You have ſeen, my dear Sir, a coffee-houſe orator, in the height of a warm harangue, apply his

his fiſt to the ſurface of the table before him with ſuch violence, as if he intended be mere force to extract his argument therefrom. Such was the exertion of Syntax. "As well might the meaneſt "of my pupils," cried he, and he extended forth his arm, "criticiſe the ini-"mitable productions of the Grecian "Poets, or cope in valourous feats with "the glorious hero of Macedonia, as "thou, O, illiterate Mortgage!"——

Down dropped the ponderous paw with quick velocity, and with equal quickneſs did honeſt Harrow ſtart from his chair.

I have juſt hinted, that the farmer is rapidly advancing in improvement; and at this time he had taken advantage of a few drops of ſpilt liquor, to delineate a quick thought in hieroglyphicks, when the finger which performed the office of a pencil ſuſtained the keeneſt preſſure imaginable, from the unguarded movement of the clerk's.

A joke is no joke, it is ſaid, when its operation tends to the prejudice of any perſon, and this, it may be concluded,

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was the light in which Mr. Harrow viewed the mirth of the company; for, he attacked the aggreſſor, and with the ſame expedition that he had quitted his own ſeat, tumbled the other from his.

"I will ſooner be tranſported beyond "the boundary of our atmoſphere than "be treated thus," exclaimed Syntax, ſnatching the remains of his wig from the flames with his left hand, and with the right darting a random blow acroſs the table.

"By the genius of Ferdinand!" roared old Fearlittle, on whoſe vetran jaws this unfavourable compliment took place, "By the immortal genius of Prince Fer-"dinand!" repeated he, at the ſame time he hurled the punch bowl by an impulſive motion—"I will annihilate the pol-"troon that dares attack my perſon."—Confuſed as the amazed Syntax was, ſelf-preſervation taught him to avoid the deſigned inſtrument of deſtruction, and it coming in violent contract with the oppoſite wall, a reverberating fragment took place in the noſe of the Doctor, and in a moment his face was bedewed by a purple

purple torrent. Stung at the ſharpneſs of the ſcarification, the wounded phyſician demanded no ſort of oral explanation, but began to lay about him without much reſpect of perſons; a charming *fracas* ſucceeded, and every thing wore the moſt hoſtile complexion, when a tremendous knocking was heard at the outer door.

The night was dark and ſtormy; the clock had ſtruck twelve, and the noiſe ſeemed viſibly to have its effect on the whole company. "Who knocks there?" thrice iſſued in a tone of audibility from the lungs of the hoſt to no purpoſe. "I have no faith in ſpirits—but, *Vir ſupit qui pauca loquitor*," ſaid the curate, in a tremulous voice. "'Phaw! ſpirits, indeed!" exclaimed the exciſeman, "what, in the name of terror, would ſpirits do on earth in ſuch a night?"—He was juſt advancing towards the door, when the diſmal Deity whom he had invoked, in order to puniſh his contempt for his inviſible authority, applied for my aſſiſtance, and made me utter, in a melancholy accent this interrogation---"Has

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any of the company heard of the terrible murder perpetrated laſt night?"

Now, although ſtubborn reaſoning had inſpired this unbelieving limb of Government with ſo little reſpect for ſupernatural exiſtents, yet he had by no means conquered his natural averſion to the grim deſtroyer of mortality; and, of courſe, this dreary query had no ſooner penetrated into his brain than, like an electrical ſhock, it communicated its influence inſtantaneouſly through the reſt of his body and threw him backwards with ſuch violence, that the Attorney, who was immediately in his rear, had great reaſon to congratulate himſelf upon the ſucceeding ſalutation.

"Undermine my cartridge-box!---what ar't afraid of?" uttered the adjutant, irritated to a degree of fury by the uncomfortable ſtroke of a large ſaucepan, which the ſudden retreat of the exciſeman had ſhaken from a neighbouring ſhelf.---"Blood and thunder! what of ſpirits and murders! I will open the poſtern were a whole battalion of devils on the outſide." Again rattled the knocker,

ker, in a louder peal than before. The atheiſt's teeth ſhattered; the divine turned up his eyes in devout fervancy; and the very learned Syntax, ſpringing with one exertion over the table, ſeated himſelf cloſe to the chimney corner.

"There is nobody here," cried the old warior, rolling his dim organs of ſight through the gloom: he had opened the door, and as he ſpoke, he ſtepped out but his feet meeting with an unexpected obſtruction, his head came to an immediate connexion with the pavement. "Sha'nt 'ſcape me!" ſaid he, recovering himſelf, and dragging the object over which he had fallen into the houſe. It was a large covered baſket, of an uncommon ſhape and workmanſhip

The door was no ſooner once more ſecured, than the ſoldier proceeded to examine his booty, in midſt of a moſt profound ſilence; but ſure, no painter, in the moſt extravagant flight of his imagination, ever penciſed ſuch a groupe of diſtorted features as ſhone in the face of each amazed individual, when the taking off the cover preſented to our ſight

a beautiful male child, faſt wrapped up in the balmy embrace of Morpheus.

When the ſtupefaction, which ſo very unexpected an incident occaſioned, had a little ſubſided, we collected ideas ſufficient to admire the nice and comfortable manner in which the little ſtranger was depoſited. "This can be the off-ſpring of no common parents," ſaid the warrior, gently taking the infant's hand, and looking with ſurprize on a ſmall bracelet carioufly ſpangled with diamonds.——"Who," continued he, "could expoſe ſuch an innocent whilſt ſuch a trinket remained in their poſſeſſion?"

The child awoke, looked up in the ſpeaker's face, ſmiled, and preſſed his finger to its lips. The old man was moved; never did he appear ſo amiable. I ever admired ſenſibility, and my heart from that moment folded him ſtill ſtronger in friendſhip. He lifted the babe in his arms---a tear eſcaped the confines of his eye, and ſtole quivering down a furrow age has planted in his hardy cheek.

A letter was fixed in a fold of the child's covering; the juſtice ſeized on it, and, with an audible voice, read the direction,—"George Barnfield, Eſq;"

"O infinity of ſpace!" exclaimed Syntax, "is it poſſible that the good and magnanimous proprietor of Melville-Hall could ſo far forget the dictates of chaſtity, plunge into the Tartarean abyſs of carnal ſenſuality, and from thence pluck forth this animated proof of his letcherous inclination? From this time forth, I will believe the ſolution of every problem erroneous; as the ſine of an angle is to its oppoſite ſide; radius fails now in producing the hypothenuſe; we may now ſuppoſe that our Antipodes inhabit one of the ſatellites of Jupiter, or that the diurnal motion of Saturn may be determined by this ſimple propoſition---let A, B, and C---"

Here the clergyman thought proper to interrupt him, by offering up a wiſh to Heaven, that the brat might not become a burden to the pariſh.

FINIS.

BRITISH MUSEUM